

St. Peter's Parish Episcopal Church
8th Street & Atlantic Avenue
Fernadnina Beach
Nassau County
Florida

HABS No. FL-281

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Historic American Buildings Survey
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. PETER'S PARISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HABS No. FL-281

Location: NE corner of Eighth Street and Atlantic Avenue, Fernandina Beach, Nassau County, Florida.

Present Owner: Protestant Episcopal Churches in the Diocese of Florida.

Present Occupant: St. Peter's Parish.

Present Use: Sanctuary.

Significance: St. Peter's Church is the finest known example of architecture attempted by Robert S. Schuyler. Its Gothic Revival construction is unique in that it is built of tabby, an indigenous building material of Florida.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1881-1884. In 1881, the Episcopal parish at Fernandina began to consider the erection of a new church to replace their small and inadequate wooden chapel. (Florida Mirror, February 26, 1881; April 23, 1881) An article in the Florida Mirror on April 16, 1881 stated that the ground had been staked out for the erection of the new edifice. (The article indicated that the church was to be located on the southwest corner of Eighth Street and Center Streets [Atlantic]. This must have been an inaccurate statement since there is no evidence that the church ever owned that parcel or that construction on that site was ever commenced. In any case, Robert Schuyler submitted plans for the church in April 1881. (Florida Mirror, April 23, 1881) In August, the cornerstone was layed by Reverend Owen P. Thackara, the rector. The ceremony was described as follows: "The stone then being put into position by the architect, Mr. R. S. Schuyler, the Reverend O. P. Thackera striking the stone thrice with the mallet, pronounced the official laying . . . The cornerstone contained [among other artifacts] a miniature plan of the proposed church. . . ." (Vestry Minutes, August 11, 1881, Vol. I, 30-31) On March 30, 1884 the first services were held in the new church. April 13, 1884 was the date of the formal opening. (Vestry Minutes, March 30, 1884, Vol. I, 40)
2. Architect: Robert S. Schuyler was chosen as the architect for the church edifice. He was experienced in designing churches as he had already completed three carpenter gothic chapels in Waldo, Fairbanks, and Lake Sante Fe (Earlton), all in Florida. (Werndli, 7) In 1881, he moved to Fernandina from Waldo. Schuyler came to Florida from Troy, New York in 1878. He was born in New York City

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in 1830 and was trained as an architect there. During the Civil War, he was a captain in the 13th Regiment, New York Calvary. He later saw service in the army on the frontier.

In Fernandina, Schuyler was not only an architect who designed several of the town's residences and commercial buildings, but he was also an active community leader. He served as a vestryman on St. Peter's vestry for several terms. (Vestry Minutes, 1890s, passim) In the early 1890s, Schuyler served as county judge and also four years as city clerk. On July 24, 1895, he died of Bright's disease and was buried in St. Peter's cemetery in Fernandina. (Florida Times-Union, July 25, 1895)

3. Original and subsequent owners: The church now owns all of Block 44 in the official plat of the City of Fernandina which was lithographed and issued by the Florida Railroad in 1857 and enlarged, revised, and reissued by the Florida Town Improvement Company in 1889 and 1901. However, the church edifice is located on lot 1 of Block 44 and backs up very close to lot 8 of the same block. As a result the chain of title on these two lots only will be considered. The chain of title is drawn from the Deed Books of Nassau County, Florida:

1878 Quit Claim Deed, November 24, 1878, recorded
 December 3, 1878 in Book R, page 42. All claim
 on lot 1 of Block 44 was sold for \$10.00 by
 Samuel A. Swann and wife
 to
 Reverend John Freeman Young for the Protestant
 Episcopal Churches in the Diocese of Florida.

1879 Sheriff's Deed, January 14, 1879, recorded
 in Book R, page 55. Lots 1 and 2 of Block
 44 was transfered through a sheriff's sale
 according to court order from
 Joseph J. Acosta
 to
 Reverend John Freeman Young for the Protestant
 Episcopal Churches in the Diocese of Florida.

1890 Deed, June 2, 1890, recorded April 25,
 1893 in Book Y, page 379. Lots 6, 7, and 8
 of Block 44 were transfered by
 Samuel A. Swann and wife
 to
 Protestant Episcopal Churches in the Diocese
 of Florida.

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4. Builder, contractor, suppliers, etc.: George Cbase of Vermont was in charge of the plastering of the walls on the interior of the building. (Florida Mirror, April 7, 1883)

R. M. Henderson, a local wood worker and coffin maker, built some of the furniture including the altar (along with M. T. Burbank) and the lectern. (Florida Mirror, December 27, 1884; April 5, 1884)

Edward Colegate of New York City constructed all of the stained glass windows in the church except for the Doctors Window (in the north end of the west wall). (Samuel A. Swann to James Dougherty, May 23, 1892, Swann Papers)

W. J. McPherson of Boston constructed the Doctors Window. (Florida Mirror, April 25, 1885; Swann to W. J. McPherson, April 14, 1893, Swann Papers)

5. Original plans, construction, etc.: There are no copies of the original drawings available except for a minature set which is located in the cornerstone.

The Gothic Revival style of the church shows the progression of the ability of R. S. Schuyler, the architect. His earlier churches in Florida were for small parishes and missions. Built of wood in the simple style of Richard Upjohn, these projects did not present the problems of a larger congregation such as St. Peter's. The design for this structure was much more detailed and complicated than Schuyler's prior commissions, but was still simple and successful. (See Werndli)

The plan for the church called for a concrete (tabby) structure "with substantial walls to be covered with a coating of cement." The building was to be in "Gothic style," measuring 100' x 33'. The roof was to be open timber. Stained glass windows were planned. The Florida Mirror observed that the building "will be a great ornament to our city, and make a new departure in church architecture." (Florida Mirror, April 23, 1881)

In September 1882 it was reported that almost \$9,000 had been spent on the church and that it was expected to take another \$6,000 to complete it. (Florida Mirror, September 3, 1882) Part of the cost was broken down in an accounting in the Vestry Minutes of January 2, 1888 on page 36 of Volume I. It was recorded that \$3,938.13 had been spent on the church. Of this total \$1,300.75 was spent for materials, \$1,268.74 for labor, and \$203.22 for transportation of materials.

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By July 15, 1882 the roof timbers were in place. It was observed that "some idea [could] be formed of the appearance this fine building will present. From present appearances we think it will command admiration for its symmetrical proportions and pleasing architecture." (Florida Mirror, July 17, 1882) By September, iron shingles were laid on the roof. (Florida Mirror, September 2, 1882)

Considerable progress was made on the structure by January 1883. The walls were complete and enclosed. At this date the church was described as being in "early English perpendicular style, with lancet windows, open timber roof, covered with metallic shingles, and with its thick walls and substantial timbers seems capable of lasting for generations." (Florida Mirror, April 7, 1883)

In April 1884 the church was almost completely finished except for the seats and other furniture. Work on the tower had progressed considerably. It was to be "raised" to the "elevation where the spire" commenced and would be roofed over for the immediate future. The south porch was to be erected which would complete the building. (Florida Mirror, April 19, 1884)

The church had several stained glass windows installed during the construction. Of greatest importance was a window to commemorate Dr. Francis P. Wellborn and Dr. James C. Herndon who had died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 in Fernandina. The window, located in the north end of the west wall was commissioned by Dr. J. Baxter Upham of Boston. In April 1885, the window was installed. Constructed by W. J. McPherson of Boston the window was described as follows:

The general design is that of a crown in the upper section of the arch. Below this is a beautiful shield of purple illuminated glass. A cross of mother of pearl forms the centre of the window, ornamented by a bunch of grapes, with the symbol of the anchor representing Hope, the Holy Scriptures illustrating Christian Faith; alpha and omega, the symbol of almighty power, the beginning and the end; the cup of salvation, and the paten, the emblem of sacrifice." (Florida Mirror, April 18, 1885)

Schuyler designed the rose window which was located in the center of the west wall above the entrance. The plan was submitted to Edwin Colegate. Nothing specific is available about the original details. (Colegate to Swann, August 15, 1884, Swann Papers)

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The St. John of Patimos window, located in the south side of the west wall was also ordered from Colegate at a "cost not to exceed \$125." The window was commissioned by W. Finn. (Swann to Colegate, March 25, 1884, Swann Papers) On April 21, Colegate wrote that "there is a little more lettering than I like to put in, it is preferable to abbreviate the quotation as much as possible, the style of painting is somewhat different to any usual custom, our most learned artists at the present time are fawning the English style of Antique work which is the manner of treatment of the St. John of Patimos memorial." (Colegate to Swann, April 21, 1884, Swann Papers)

A window was also commissioned for the Jeffereys family. It was probably located fourth from the east in the south wall. On April 5 Swann sent Colegate detailed instructions for this window. The lancet point was to be filled with "bright and delicate tracery, the upper section with a large Roman cross without 'IHS' in it. The colors were to be "light but delicately shaded." The window was not to cost over \$125. (Swann to Colegate, April 5, 1884, Swann Papers) By June 6 the work on the window was complete and it was to be sent by steamer. (Colegate to Swann, June 4, 1884, Vestry Minutes)

In the fall of 1884, a trefoil window was placed over the south porch to the memory of three boys who had died the previous summer: Palmer Van Giesen, Frank D. Pope, and Willie O. Jeffereys. (Florida Mirror, December 27, 1884)

There were a total of seventeen memorial glass windows installed in the church when it was originally built. Details on any others besides the ones already mentioned are unavailable. It is known, however that Colegate made all of them except the Doctors Window. (See "Alterations and Additions" below)

In December 1884, the first pew was placed in the church by Captain H. W. King. (Florida Mirror, December 27, 1884) It was not, however, until 1887 that the remaining ones were constructed. In March of that year it was reported that lumber was cut and seasoning for the pews. (Vestry Minutes, March 6, 1887, Vol. I, 57)

R. M. Henderson built a lectern for the church in 1884. Constructed of curly pine and cedar, it was designed by Schuyler. (Florida Mirror, March 5, 1884. Henderson along with M. T. Burbank also built an altar of curly yellow pine. (Florida Mirror, December 27, 1884)

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The finished church was no doubt impressive to the residents of Fernandina. Built of tabby, the local masonry material in which shells were used as an aggregate, the walls were 18" thick. The dimensions were somewhat different than the planned size. Instead of being 100' long the building was approximately 83' long. (Sanborn map, February 1891) The church had a tower located at the southeast corner. A spire is mentioned briefly in the above description and also is pictured in an 1884 Bird's Eye View of Fernandina. (An enlargement is included with this report). However, a photograph in the parish records which was apparently taken before the fire in 1892 shows no spire. Instead it shows the tower with a roof had a small deck with a balustrade at the peak of the roof. The original church was much as it is today.

6. Alterations and additions: At 3:00 AM on February 24, 1892 fire broke out in the church, starting under the floor and in the tower. Although the fire department was called, the interior of the building was destroyed including the roof, tower, floors, windows, and furniture. (Vestry Minutes, February 24, 1892, Vol. I, 106) The treasurer of the vestry estimated the damages to the church, windows, and furniture to be nearly \$12,000. Insurance providing \$8,000 was collected on the building, windows, and steam heating. (Vestry Minutes, February 29, 1892, Vol. I, 107; April 18, 1892, Vol. I, 111)

Repairs to the church were promptly begun by the vestry. R. M. Henderson was hired to restore the furniture in the building, not including the pews. (Vestry Minutes, February 29, 1892, Vol. I, 107)

A special meeting was called on April 21, 1892 at the residence of Robert Schuyler to instruct him "to prepare drawings for a roof incorporating improved ventilation." (Vestry Minutes, April 21, 1892, Vol. I, 113)

The details of the new plan of the church provide an insight into the state of the original building. On April 25 the vestry reviewed and adopted Schuyler's plans for rebuilding the church. The following resolutions were accepted:

That the vestry approve the addition to the chancel end of the church and choir space according to the plans of Mr. Schuyler being now being us:

That the ventilation of the upper portion of the church be arranged by triangular windows, as formerly with such modifications and improvements as the architect may adopt and if deemed advisable by adding a 'dormer' on east end:

That the remainder of the woodwork of the roof be constructed as before:

That the supply pipes of the heater be placed as far as possible above and on the floor against the wall:

That the architect is requested to sketch a plan for a porch at the west end door, and to submit plans for the completion of the tower:

That the new work in the walls of the chancel be prepared with furring strips for plastering. (Vestry Minutes, April 25, 1892, Vol. I, 114)

On March 27, 1893 the building committee was authorized to accept plans for woodwork on the west wall. The designer was unspecified. (Vestry Minutes, March 27, 1893)

Construction: Proposals for the construction of the church were received on August 1, 1892 from two contractors. These were based on Schuyler's plans and specifications. W. H. Mann estimated a costs of \$3,953 and James McGiffin bid \$3,000. McGiffin was granted the contract immediately. (Vestry Minutes, August 1, 1892, Vol. I, 122) on December 1 the rebuilding of the church was begun. (Vestry Minutes, December 5, 1892, Vol. I, 123)

A partial list of the materials used in the church are available in the Samuel A. Swann Long Letter Book VI, 309. The dimensions of the building were given as 33' x 82' x 18' high, the vestry room as 18' x 36' x 18' high, and the tower room as 17' x 17' x [unclear] high, and the small tower 9' x 9' x 22' high. The list of the lumber used in the rebuilding is very detailed and is reproduced as well as can be from the very poor copy found in the letter book:

12	Principal Rafters	6"x9"x22'
12	" Braces	6"x9"x11'
14	" Pilasters	6"x9"x18'?
14	Cross Beams	?6"x6"x26'
6	King Posts	6"x6"x14'

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12 Braces	6"X6"X16'
24 [unclear]	2"X10"X6'
41? [unclear]	2"X10"X6'
24 Circle Braces	2"X16"X7'
7 Purlin Mouldings	
2 Sills	6"X12"X10'
1 "	6"X12"X20'
1 "	2"X6"X36'
31 Joists	2"X12"X32'
18 "	2"X12"X17'
12 Rafters	6"X8"X12'
Vestry [unclear] & Ridge	6"X6"X[unc]
70 Rafters [unclear]	2"X6"X26'
48 " "	2"X6"X12'
70 Rafters Rough	6"X8"X12'
48 " "	2"X[unc]X37'
16 Tower Joists	2"X10"X10'

Lumber in Large Tower [unclear]

Swann's records also provide a summary of the estimated costs of the reconstruction in Letter Book 70, 360:

Extension of Eastern end of Church	\$750.00
Building Choir Room [never begun]	300.00
Enlargement of roof windows	80.00
Castellated top of tower, etc.	175.00
West Gable cross and cresting	65.00

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Cutting of east tower door and enlarging tower-chancel door	25.00
Enlargement of heaters	175.00
2 Stain glass for vestry room	50.00
2 Cathedral glass windows for organ	50.00
Memorial window for Hedges	50.00

Apparently these listed alterations were the only ones which were made to the structure during the reconstruction. The extension of the eastern end of the church seems to be the major change. The extension was approximately 7' to the east. (Sanborn map, June 1897) The foundation of the old east wall is still visible under the flooring of the structure. In April 1892 the east wall was taken down at a cost of \$34.83. (Vestry Minutes, May 7, 1897, Vol. I, 109) The new design called for furring strips to be included for plastering. In July 1893 a supply of cedar from Richard M. Dozier of Cedar Key, Florida was accepted as a gift. These materials were to be used for the tracery, scroll work, and ornamentation in the chancel. In June the stained glass windows for the chancel were ordered. This order included the triple lancet in the east wall and the Hedges memorial at the extreme east end of the south wall. (Schuyler to Swann, June 29, 1892, Swann Papers)

The triple lancet was to be similar to the one lost in the fire. The coloring was to remain the same, but the middle figure was to be changed so that the "Drapery [would be] . . . less contrasted and made to hang and enclose the under garment. Make Dove hover instead of go straight down." (Swann to Colegate, August 2, 1892) The lettering, which was apparently in the original, was omitted. (Swann to Colegate, August 3, 1892, Swann Papers) The windows on either side of the central window were to have ventilators installed in the lowest panel. These were to be worked by leverods located in another part of the chancel. (Vestry Minutes, Vol. I, 110) When the triple windows were received, the vestry was disappointed in the central figure. (Swann to Colegate, June 22, 1893, Swann Papers) As a result, they voted to take down the windows and send them back to Colegate for "improvement in the expression of the face and drapery." (Vestry Minutes, July 9, 1893, Swann Papers)

The other window in the chancel was to be a memorial to the "late John Hedges." (Vestry Minutes, Vol. I, 110) The window was to cost between \$150 and \$175. (Swann to Colegate, February 9, 1893, Swann Papers) St. John the Evangelist was adopted as the subject of

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the window. There was to be ventilator with "tracery" but not St. Johns face. An eagle was also specified as an element to be incorporated in the design. (Swann to Colegate, March 1, 1893, Swann Papers)

Windows: The windows in the chancel were not the only ones in the church to be replaced. In fact, according to Samuel Swann every window was destroyed and had to be duplicated. (Swann to Colegate, February 24, 1892, Swann Papers) By May 1892, Swann had arranged for Colegate to repair those which were damaged and to replace those which were destroyed. Those which were damaged were identified as: the Huntington windows (triple lancet in chancel), the St. John at Patimos (south end of the west wall), the Holy Innocents (extreme west end of north wall), the Dotterer window (eighth from the west in the north wall), and the trefoil memorial (above the southwest entrance). (Swann to Colegate, May 9, 1892, Swann Papers) After these windows were sent to Colegate, he notified Swann in June that they were beyond repair and could not be restored. Instead, he offered to reconstruct all of the windows originally furnished by him. This was to be done at a considerably lower cost than charged for the originals. (Vestry Minutes, June 6, 1892, Vol. I, 115)

Colegate's offer was accepted and in later correspondence there appears some general instructions on the reconstruction. It cannot be determined if these instructions apply to all of the windows since all of the windows do not have ventilators as specified. These directions appear below:

In making the memorial windows please bear in mind that there is no sash but the glass to be made as to fit snugly within the jambs of the window frames. This will add a little to the width, etc., of the windows--all of the windows are to be made with ventilators. The original iron frames, which are all in good condition, I will send you . . . should . . . new ones be found necessary, we would like them to be about half the entire length of the windows. (Swann to Colegate, June 29, 1892)

Swann instructed Colegate to begin work on seven of the windows since their donors requested that no change be made in them. These were the Armorial Medallion (sixth from the west in the north wall), St. Luke (second from the west in the north wall), St. John (third from the west in the north wall), emblem from Whitney (fifth from the east in the south wall), emblem from Jeffereys (fourth from the east in the north wall), Holy Innocents, and trefoil memorial.

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The remaining windows were to be redesigned by Schuyler. These were Resurrection (sixth from the east in the south wall), emblem for Swann (third from the east in the south wall), St. Agnes (first from the east in the south wall) St. Mary (second from the east in the south wall), emblem from Reid (eighth from the east in the south wall), emblem from Finegan (northeast corner of choir), rose (above the main entrance in west wall), St. John at Patimos, and Doctors window. These windows were altered varying degrees and in many cases it appears from later instructions that little change was made in the new designs. These new designs were necessary since the originals were unavailable. (Swann to Colegate, June 29, 1892, Swann Papers)

In addition to the memorial windows, eight triangular roof windows and eleven plain glass windows were ordered from Colegate. (Swann to Colegate, June 29, 1892, Swann Papers)

While there is no information on the St. Agnes and St. Mary windows it is clear from examination of them that the present ones are not of these subjects. In fact they are more in line with the design of those which are referred to as emblem windows. There is no evidence that these windows were ever replaced in later years.

In the St. John at Patimos window there was no change in the design except that it was to be 18" shorter. (Schuyler to Swann, June 29, 1892, Swann Papers)

The Doctors Window was sent to W. J. McPherson for reconstruction. He had originally built the window at a cost of \$153.50, but he estimated that a new window would cost \$235. (Swann to McPherson, April 14, 1893, Swann Papers) After some negotiations, the price was reduced to \$200. It was specified that the window have no sash or ventilator and that it must be able to fit right into the jamb. Swann warned of the hot afternoon sun which had warped the original. It was requested that the colors in the stained glass and jewels be "toned down." (Swann to McPherson, June 10, 1893, Swann Papers) Apparently the window was satisfactory and Swann was extremely pleased: "There is no doubt but that McPherson has sent us one his best pieces of work. The window . . . is much finer and much prettier than the original." (Swann to J. B. Upham, November 8, 1893, Swann Papers)

Swann asked Colegate to replace the "sheaf of wheat" and "bunch of grapes" in the emblem windows from Reid and Finegan with other emblems. (Swann to Colegate, July 11, 1893, Swann Papers)

Probably the most interesting set of instructions for a window was for the one commissioned by Samuel Swann. He wrote Colegate:

I desire that you set your BEST workmen on my (Swann) window. I want the SAME emblems and ABOUT the same shades of color (nothing darker) BUT I am willing to pay . . . to have finer STAINED instead of painted glass where it is practicable, especially in the lancet point and in and around the emblems. I don't know that you could improve the emblems . . ." (Swann to Colegate, July 11, 1892, Swann Papers)

The vestry room in the tower was to receive two new windows. Swann requested James Dougherty of New York City to prepare these windows using the same "Cheribum" glass as the same artist for All Angels. Swann sent drawings of the windows specifying that they were to be about 19-1/2' high. They were to be without a sash, but instead fit into the jambs. There were to be 4' ventilators. The glass requested was 4-1/2" circular pieces colored yellow. Each has the face of a cherub on the convex surface. The individual pieces of glass were arranged in straight rows throughout the entire window. (Swann to Dougherty, February 13, 1893, Swann Papers) In April the windows were received and it was discovered that the lancet points did not fit the openings and they were returned to Dougherty to have new points made. (Swann to Dougherty, April 17, 1893, Swann Papers) These were changed and windows were installed. The total cost for them was \$70.00. (Swann to Dougherty, May 8, 1893, Swann Papers)

The remaining windows which were reconstructed are not mentioned in any references which have been consulted.

Furnishings: In April 1893 the vestry considered the question of a new altar. It was decided to accept a design which was submitted by Reverend J. A. Oertel of Bel Aire, Maryland. (Vestry Minutes, February 6, 1893, Vol. I, 125) An undated newspaper article describes the design and spiritual significance of the altar:

The altar is a memorial to the late Bishop Rutledge, and has this inscription: 'In memory of Francis H. Rutledge, First Bishop of Florida, Consecrated Oct. 15, 1851. Died November 6, 1866. . . . The altar is of oak, beautifully carved, and is thus described by the designer: "God himself has from of old addressed men in symbols concerning heavenly, eternal truths. By art especially, we must do the same, and signs must stand for spiritual verities. So in this altar.

"An altar is itself a symbol, denoting sacrifice, offering memorial workshop. All these are contained in the Eucharist and all these are represented in the Christ, the God-Man. And so His two-fold nature is shown by the two columns supporting the arch upon which mainly rests the table. . . . 'One capital of these two columns is carved into a rose for the Rose of Sharon, the Beloved of the Father is called. The other into a Passion flower, since as man He suffered and died. . . .

"Under the arch, He is represented as the Lamb of God in submissive attitude, giving himself an offering for man's redemption upon a mound of earth, the primitive altar and typifying this globe.

"The background is arranged in squares, the cube being the earth figure, as the Holy of the Holies in the Tabernacle was a cube within which was placed the Ark. So here the cubes contain stars as symbols of Heaven and celestial glory. . . .

'To the right and the left of the Lamb in deeply carved panels are the Wheat and the Vine, the symbols of His flesh and blood. . . .'

It should be noted here that the section of the altar under the arch which represented the Lamb of God was removed at some undetermined date and replaced with a simple panel present now. The present rector states that he has probably located the panel in the garage of a relative of a former rector. This relative reportedly lives in Sewanee, Tennessee.

As stated above, R. M. Henderson was instructed to restore the furniture in the church. Among the furniture he repaired was the baptismal font which is in the church today. In recording the church, the following quotation was found handwritten on a card under the marble bowl in the font:

Designed by Robert S. Schuyler. Made by R. M. Henderson finished in 1886. Fernandina, Florida. Charred during burning of St. Peter's Church, February 24, 1892. Restoration finished August 16, 1901 by maker. All outside material new. 58 (pc) in base. 50 in column, 123 in bowl, 231 in all. Reblessed in Church August 16, 1901.

According to the present rector, the wood cover of the font was built by another craftsman at a later date.

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The vestry ordered pews for the church from D. Cooper of Gainesville, Florida, for \$6.50 each. They were received in April 1893 and considered to be satisfactory. (Vestry Minutes, March 6, 1893, Vol. 1, 126; April 12, 1893, Vol. I, 128)

Organ: The church had a small organ before it was burned. After the fire, Swann approached the vestry concerning the purchase of an organ "commensurate with [the church's] needs." The proposed instrument was to have two manuels with stops, pedals, and mechanical appliances with pneumatic action and a water motor.

The estimated cost of this organ was between \$1,800 and \$2,000. In order to finance this project, Swann offered to buy the church's stock in the Fernandina Lyceum Hall at par of face value, \$500. To that he added \$1,000 of his personal assets. The offer was accepted and Schuyler was instructed to prepare drawings for an organ chamber. (Vestry Minutes, May 12, 1893, Vol. I, 139) In June, it was reported that a contract had been drawn up between the vestry and L. C. Harrison and Co. of Bloomfield, New Jersey, at a cost of \$2,000 complete and set up in the church. (Vestry Minutes, June 21, 1893, Vol. I, 147) A clipping from an unknown paper provides a description of the organ:

The casing of native pine and cedar, corresponding with other wood work in the church. The large display pipes forming the upper enclosures decorated with gold and appropriate colors.

The bellows has improved action operated by a water motor.

There are two manuels -- (or key boards) -- one operating the choir organ, the other the great organ -- also two octave pedals; all of these are operated by paten tubular pneumatic action, giving a light prompt and elastic touch [sic].

The choir organ and all of the great organ except the display pipes are enclosed in the swell box operated by a balanced noiseless tremola.

There are twenty-six stops and mechanical accessories for operating the various changes in quality and volume of tone embracing the choicest selections known to organ building science of the present day. The general features of this organ including the selection of stops and the choice of mechanical accessories were planned and selected by Mr. Chas. Y. Hillyer, the present organist of St. Peter's, after his ideas derived from experience of some years ago. . .

(Unknown newspaper clipping, September 30, 1893, Vestry Minutes, Vol. I, 147)

In November 1893, the organ arrived and was placed in the church by George W. D. Pilcher. (Vestry Minutes, November 6, 1893, Vol. I, 152) In April 1895, Schuyler notified the vestry that he would provide his time and professional services in designing and superintending the construction of the organ case as a gift. (Vestry Minutes, April 15, 1895, Vol. I, 166) R. M. Henderson made the wood work for the casings. (Vestry Minutes, April 1, 1895, Vol. O, 164) The organ case was described in detail by an article in the [unknown] Citizen, a clipping found in the Vestry Minutes:

. . . the casing was designed by Judge R. S. Schuyler, one of the vestrymen of the church, and an architect of considerable ability. The style of the architecture is pure gothic, but the design of the organ is entirely the result of the architect's originality.

It is almost impossible to describe this magnificent piece of wood work, which was in course of construction nineteen months, and which is composed of hundreds of little pieces of wood without the assistance of illustrations. Only two kinds of wood are used in the construction of the instrument, but they are so neatly joined tht those two great woods of Florida, pine and cedar by the artist's genius and patient perserverance, have been made to represent brown plush, with changeable colors. . . . The casing is nearly 11' square by 6' high. The wind chest is supported by columns of cedar and brackets of cedar and pine. Columns of red cedar support the organ and the casings are so arranged as to blend pleasingly with different colored woods selected by the artist

R. M. Henderson. . . . Three kinds of pine used by Henderson in the building of the instrument are curly, straight, and rosemary. The surfaces are as smooth as glass. Mr. Henderson has succeeded in turning the common yellow pine into mahogany, satin, oak, and other hard woods. The figures in the casing are arches, crosses, and brackets. Around the wind chest, there is a strip of wood five inches wide and about ten feet long which attracts a great deal of attention. At a distance this piece of work has the appearance of a piece of satin cloth.

Just to the left of the pedals is one of the most beautiful pieces of curly pine ever seen. It is made into panels, and was produced from nothing but a piece of sap. In the center of the cross is a piece of red cedar representing a rose. The figures are so arranged in the square that by permitting the sun to reflect its rays through the colorful memorial windows

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upon it produces changeable effects such as are seen in a "tiger-eye stone." ([Unknown] Citizen, April 20, 1895, clipping in Vestry Minutes, Vol. I, 168)

The organ has had few alterations made to it since its installation in the northeast corner of the chancel. At an undertermined later date, the water motor was replaced with the present electrical motor.

In conclusion, the work which was performed on the church between 1892 and 1894 was predominantly a reconstruction of the church as it was originally designed and built. In this work, it was fortunate that Robert Schuyler, who had designed the original building, could supervise the reconstruction. The fact that the tabby walls survived the fire was no doubt helpful in the rebuilding. Due to these facts the integrity of the building has not been lost or otherwise changed.

Later alterations: The church has had very few major changes since the restoration. These changes were not damaging to the integrity of the building.

During the restoration there was discussion of the installation of electric lighting but apparently no final decision was made. (Vestry Minutes, June 21, 1893, Vol. I, 140) Electric lights were, however, noted on the 1903 Sanborn map.

In the 1960s and 1970s four new stained glass windows were added to the church. These memorial windows are: the Groover window (first from the east in the north wall), the Carnegie window (third from the east in the north wall), the Kennard window (fifth from the east in the north wall) and the Whitney window (sixth from the east in the north wall). These windows were constructed by Dahl Carter and Son of Jacksonville, Florida.

The church was a natural color of tabby until 1868 when the vestry painted the building white in order to seal the structure from moisture.

The roof was also recently painted with a plastic coating to prevent leakage while preserving the tin roofing material. (Interview with Father Kelly)

B. Historical Context:

St. Peter's Mission was organized on June 14, 1858, in Fernandina by Reverend Owen P. Thackara, Rector of Trinity Church, St. Augustine. The first service was held in Timanus Hall located at the northeast corner of Atlantic Avenue and Second Street, where Noyes' brick building stands today. In 1859, the congregation moved into its first church which was replaced by the present edifice.

Although before the construction of the present church, it should be noted that Fernandina and St. Peter's served as the episcopal residence for Bishop John Freeman Young from 1869-1873. (Cushman, 83)

The church has had several important vestrymen throughout its history. These included Robert S. Schuyler, Samuel A. Swann, George R. Fairbanks, and Henry E. Dotterer. All of these men contributed significantly to the development of post-Civil War Florida as well as to the growth and expansion of the Episcopal Church in the State. The parish's rectors have also been significant to the history of the church in Florida. The most important rector was Owen P. Thackara who organized the mission and was rector during the construction of the present church. His contributions to the church have been recognized by the Diocese and the parish.

C. Sources of Information

1. Plans: "Plot Plan of the Lands of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Fernandina, Florida, January, 1954." n.p., 1954. In possession of St. Peter's Parish, Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Old views: Photograph of church and rectory looking northwest. In possession of the First Baptist Church, 504 Alachua Avenue, Fernandina Beach, Florida. Located in the photograph collection in the Historical Library. n.d.

Photograph of church looking northeast. In possession of George Davis, Fernandina Beach, Florida. n.d.

View of Fernandina from water tower looking west. Shows the top of the church after the fire with the top of the tower gone and all of the roof and east wall removed. The interior of the west wall can be seen. This photograph is of a large area and the details of the church is in reality a small portion of the photograph. An enlargement is included with this report. In possession of Fernandina Beach Chamber of Commerce, 100 Atlantic Avenue, Fernandina Beach, Florida. n.d.

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The following photographs are in the collection of St. Peter's Parish, Fernandina Beach, Florida:

Looking northwest, showing the church with tower. This picture appears to have been taken prior to the fire because the church does not look like the views of the structure after the fire. n.d.

Looking west, a recent photograph of the building showing the tower and chancel. n.d.

Looking east showing the west and south sides of the structure. n.d.

Photograph showing the south side of the church. n.d.

Assorted postcards in black and white and in color. n.d.

Recent photograph showing roof and dormer detail. n.d.

Recent photograph showing tower detail. n.d.

Interior of church looking west. Shows chancel, organ, etc. c.a. 1926

3. Primary and unpublished sources:

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Florida: Amelia Island Plantation, 1973.

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1897. In Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida,
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1909. In Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida,
Library East, Map Room.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Fernandina, Florida,
February 1926. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company,
1926. In Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida,
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Werndli, Phillip A. "Carpenter Gothic Architecture of the
Episcopal Church in Florida." Unpublished manuscript, 1973.
In possession of the author.

Prepared by: Phillip A. Werndli
Historian
HABS-Fernandina Beach, Florida
August 23, 1974

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This church is a fine example of Gothic Revival Ecclesiastical Architecture. Built of tabby construction, it is the most substantial and best known structure designed by Robert S. Schuyler.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The single story church measures 36' (3 bay front) by 90' (7 bay side). Cruciform in plan, it has been modified with the addition of the organ chamber and the extension of the east altar wall.
2. Foundations: Tabby walls with two intermediate rows of concrete piers running the length of the structure. Evidence of old foundations indicates previous location of east altar wall.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The tabby walls have been plastered with a sand finish aggregate and painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: The tabby perimeter walls with buttresses support the wood framed flooring and wood roof trusses in the nave. The roof trusses reflect gothic period construction methods as well as the separating three lancet arches and columns separating the nave from choir and altar.

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5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The west entrance is on axis with the altar. The south entrance is a tripartite cloistered entry with gable roofs over each part. The south sacristy and bell tower entrance has a gable-end bracketed roof.
6. Chimneys: There is a single chimney within the north wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All doors are of wood panel construction with tongue and groove inset panels. Highly decorated and carved members are in a lancet and circle motif. Lancet panels are fixed and decorated in the same manner. Tripartite lancet arches and two composite columns separate nave from altar and choir.
 - b. Windows and shutters: All windows are lancet arches in pairs between buttresses. Each window is a memorial to a particular member or members of the parish. There is a tripartite window behind the altar. There is a large rose window in the west wall above the entry. In the north wall there is a lancet tripartite dedication window. In the south wall above the entrance there is a trifol window. All are of stained glass.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The nave is a gable end roof as well as the lower altar roof. The choir apse has a semi-conical roof withj the organ chamber roof hipped.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: There is a heavy cornice and gutter constructed of wood.
 - c. Dormers, towers: There are six dormers, three per side of the nave roof. Triangular in elevation with the diamond pattern glazing, there are square transoms inset and now non-operative.

The bell tower is octagonal in plan with buttresses at each corner, rising approximately 52'. The bell platform is located behind louvered lancet windows. Below on the southwest and southeast faces, there are two niches. There is a separate adjacent stair tower to the north leading to a platform below the bell platform.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Cruciform in plan, the nave is rectangular with a raised floor at the crossing with choir to the left (north) and sacristy and bell tower above to the right (south).

An organ chamber (in the northeast corner) and altar extension are at the east wall. Raised on a platform, the altar partially blocks a tripartite window in the east wall.

- b. Bell tower: The bell is situated within the tower over the sacristy and is accessible by ladder.

2. Stairways: A stair tower to the belfry is situated between the south altar wall and bell tower. It contains a winding stair.

3. Flooring: Uniform hardwood floors are covered with carpeting in the aisles and altar area.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls are plastered and painted white above a 4' - 0" pine wainscot constructed of molding rail and vertical tongue and groove paneling.

The ceiling is also tongue and groove painted blue. Roof trusses and pilasters are exposed and are also of stained pine.

5. Doorways and doors: Similar circle and lancet motif carving and tongue and groove doors carry into the interior. The sacristy door is an elaborately carved glass panel door. Quadrifoil and lancet arch tracery predominates with circle and cusps in the wood lancet panel above.

6. Special decorative features, trim:

- a. There is a heavy pine cornice in the choir arm and nave.

- b. The organ case and facade pipes are highly decorated. The organ case is a combination of various woods and carries similar decorative elements as seen throughout. The facade pipes are located in two ranks, one to the west facing the nave and one to the south facing the altar area. Both are highly decorated with paint in blues, gold, red, white, and black. The case above is

articulated with round cornice brackets. The corner of the case has engaged columnettes similar to the structural columns.

- c. The baptismal font is highly carved with trifoil carving on each of the eight sides. The lower half is a combination of engaged columns and lancet arches. A conical cover is carved in a leaf pattern. Constructed of wood, the predominant feature is curly pine.
 - d. The altar is a memorial carved in honor of a former rector. It also reflects the lancet and trifoil motif with a carved wheat motif on the lower left and a carved grape and leaf motif on the right symbolizing the eucharistic elements.
7. Notable hardware: Main entries into the nave from both the south and west have elaborately decorated door bolts and hinge plates. The west door has what appears to be an original door knob and locking mechanism. The key is hinged at the shaft.
8. Mechanical equipment:
- a. Lighting: Modern pendant lamps hang from the vertical members of the collar brace.
 - b. Heating: There are wall mounted heating units on both sides of the nave. Air-conditioning is accomplished through floor ducts at the perimeter of the church.

D. Site

- 1. General setting: This church, located at the corner of Eighth Street and Atlantic Avenue, is oriented with the axial entrance to the west on Eighth Street.
- 2. Outbuildings: Modern kitchen and fellowship and office facilities are located to the north extending to Alachua Street.

Prepared by: Charles Edwin Chase
Field Supervisor, HABS
Fernandina Beach, Florida
August 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Bicentennial Commission of Florida. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, this project was completed during the summer of 1974, at the HABS Field Office, Fernandina Beach, Florida, by Charles Edwin Chase (University of Florida), project supervisor; Phillip Werndli (University of Florida), project historian; Janice Fahey (Rhode Island School of Design) and Frederick Wiedenmann (University of Florida), architects; Grady J. Reich, Jr. (University of Texas) and Roger Swayze (University of Oregon), student architects.

ADDENDUM TO:
ST. PETER'S PARISH (EPISCOPAL CHURCH)
Eighth Street & Atlantic Avenue
Fernandina Beach
Nassau County
Florida

HABS FL-281
FLA, 45-FERB, 7-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001